

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 13338 071824Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13338

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TAGS: PFOR PLO UNGA XF

SUBJECT: PLO OBJECTIVES AT UPCOMING UNGA DEBATE

REF: BEIRUT 12610 (NOT SENT USUN NY)

SUMMARY: WALID KHALIDI, AUB PROF AND DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES, DELIVERED SIGNIFICANT SEMI-PUBLIC LECTURE HERE NOV 6 IN WHICH HE OUTLINED PLO OBJECTIVES IN UPCOMING UNGA DEBATE ON PALESTINE. EMPHASIZING THAT HIS REMARKS REFLECTED THINKING OF TOP-LEVEL PALESTINIAN (I.E., PLO)LEADERSHIP, HE STATED, INTER ALIA, THAT THEI ESSENTIAL GOAL IS TO OBTAIN REAFFIRMATION OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND THAT THEY RECOGNIZE US ROLE AT UNGA IS "ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL". KHALIDI ALSO SUGGESTED THAT 'ARAFAT AND CO. ARE PREPARED SETTLE FOR PALESTINIAN STATE IN WEST BANK AND GAZA AND TO ACCEPT FACT OF ISRAEL'S EX-ISTENCE IN REMAINDER OF PALESTINE. END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKING FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR TO PARTICIPANTS (WHO INCLUDED SEVERAL EMBOFFS STUDYING ARABIC AT FSI/BEIRUT) AT SEMI-ANNUAL ME SEMINAR SPONSORED BY BRITISH-RUN LANGUAGE SCHOOL (MECAS) NEAR BEIRUT, KHALIDI PROVIDED NUMBER OF VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO VIEWS OF TOP-LEVEL PLO LEADERSHIP RE UPCOMING UNGA DEBATE. FOLLOWING ARE SALIENT PARTS OF HIS REMARKS AS RECONSTRUCTED FROM NOTES AND MEMORIES OF EMBOFFS PRESENT. (WE HAD ALERTED THEM TO OUR INTEREST IN WHAT KHALIDI HAD TO SAY).

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 13338 071824Z

(A) KHALIDI DECLINED TO ENGAGE IN TRADITIONAL REHASH OF

RIGHTS AND WONGS INVOLVED IN PALESTINE DISPUTE AND GAVE ONLY A MINIMAL HISTORICAL LEAD-IN. HE SAID HE PREFERRED TALK INSTEAD ABOUT PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES, PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH UNGA DECISION TO INVITE PLO TO PARTICIPATE IN UPCOMING DEBATE WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "POTENTIALLY HISTORIC".

(B) TURNING TO SC RES 242, KHALIDI CLAIMED IT WAS "NOT GOOD ENOUGH" FROM PALESTINIAN POINT OF VIEW BECAUSE IT CONTAINED NO SPECIFIC MENTION OF PALESTINIANS. WHAT IS NEEDED, HE MAINTAINED, IS ANOTHER UN RES WHICH "AFFIRMS OR REAFFIRMS" PALESTINIAN RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. WHILE NOT ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO DEMAND MADE BY CERTAIN PALESTINIANS THAT RES 242 BE ABROGATED, HE CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT PLO LEADERSHIP REGARDS IT AS ACCEPTABLE BASE ON WHICH TO BUILD PALESTINIAN CASE IN UNGA.

(C) CENTERPIECE OF KHALIDI'S LECTURE WAS LIST OF FIVE POINTS WHICH HE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED IS ACCURATE SUMMARY OF PLO LEADERSHIP'S CURRENT OBJECTIVES:

(1) UNGA ENDORSEMENT OF CREATION OF PALESTINIAN "STATE" TO BE SET UP "IN WEST BANK, GAZA AND EAST JERUSALEM";

(2) NEED FOR THIS "STATE" TO HAVE "FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL, AND I MEAN ALL, IF ITS NEIGHBORS";

(3) NEED FOR THIS "STATE" TO HAVE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN;

(4) EXPECTATION THAT ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD LEAD TO "GRADUAL DEFUSING OF SITUATION" (PRESUMABLY IN LESSENING ARAB-ISRAELI TENSIONS); AND,

(5) EXPECTATION THAT THERE WOULD ENSUE "SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MODUS VIVENDI (BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAELIS) WHICH NO ONE CAN NOW FORESEE BUT TOWARD WHICH EVERYONE CAN WORK".

(D) IN AMPLIFYING ABOVE POINTS, PARTICULARLY POINT (2), KHALIDI TOOK PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THEY WERE NOT HIS OWN "BRAINWAVE" BUT "REFLECTED THINKING OF TOP ELEMENTS IN THE PALESTINIAN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 13338 071824Z

LEADERSHIP". US AND ISRAEL, HE SAID, "SHOULD UNDERSTAND THEIR IMPLICATIONS," SINCE THEY REPRESENT A "COPERNICAN REVOLUTION IN PALESTINIAN THINKING". KHALIDI ADDED: "I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE DIMENSIONS OF THIS LINE OF THINKING". HE ALSO STATED THAT BOTH ALGERIA'S BOUMEDIENNE AND SYRIA'S ASSAD HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF ABOVE FIVE POINTS AND HAVE APPROVED THEM. IN CONCLUSION, KHALIDI STRESSED THAT IN ADDITION TO PALESTINIAN DESIRE TO PLAY "CONSTRUCTIVE" ROLE AT UNGA, USG'S ROLE ALSO WOULD BE

"ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL".

2. KHALIDI SPOKE FROM NOTES TO WHICH HE FREQUENTLY REFERRED UPON COMPLETING HIS REMARKS, HE QUICKLY LEFT THE ROOM WITHOUT OPENING FLOOR FOR QUESTIONS.

3. COMMENT: DESPITE KHALIDI'S UNWILLINGNESS OF LATE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH US DIRECTLY (REFTEL), WE ARE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN FROM TENOR OF HIS REMARKS AND FRM HIS REPEATED REFERENCES TO HIS AUDIENCE AS "YOU AMERICANS" THAT HE INTENDED HIS COMMENTS FOR HIGH-LEVEL USG CONSUMPTION. GIVEN HIS KNOWN ACCESS TO 'ARAFAT AND HIS PROVEN ABILITY IN OUR PAST CONTACTS WITH HIM TO EXPRESS VIEWS OF PLO "MODERATES" RELIABLY AND ACCURATELY, WE VIEW HIS LECTURE AS AN ATTEMPT TO PASS YET ANOTHER MESSAGE TO US FOR TRANSMITTAL TO WASHINGTON. IN ANY EVENT, HIS REMARKS WENT CONSIDERABLY BEYOND ANY OTHER INDICATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED TO DATE (BEIRUT 13281) THAT PLO SEEKS "POSITIVE" OUTCOME FROM UNGA DEBATE AND IS PREPARED SETTLE FOR HALF-LOAF SOLUTION OF PALESTINE PROBLEM THAT WOULD RECOGNIZE (AT LEAST DE FACTO) ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE.
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